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**Friday, June 15, 2007**

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## Isaac's foster mom defensive

In ending testimony, she tries to protect daughter

June 15, 2007

BY JACK KRESNAK

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

As Charlsie Adams-Rogers finished a grueling day defending herself in a Detroit courtroom Thursday, her attorney reminded her that she -- not her adolescent adopted daughter -- was on trial.

The former foster mother maintained that she had no idea the girl could be violent despite numerous reports from schools, a psychiatric hospital and a counseling center that her daughter was physically and verbally aggressive and had threatened to kill a schoolmate.

Though the girl has not been charged with a crime, authorities believe she may have been the person who beat 2-year-old Isaac Lethbridge to death in an upstairs bedroom of Adams-Rogers northwest Detroit home on Aug. 16, 2006.

"Are you trying to protect" the girl? defense attorney Warren Harris asked his client.

"Yes," she replied.

Adams-Rogers is charged with involuntary manslaughter and child abuse in Isaac's death and child abuse in the mistreatment of Isaac's 4-year-old sister.

Testifying before a Wayne County Circuit Court jury, Adams-Rogers teared up once while speaking about what happened to Isaac. But she cried at least three times while talking about her daughter, who was 12 at the time of Isaac's death and is now 13. A judge has terminated Adams-Rogers' parental rights to that child and another adopted daughter, now 2.

Under cross-examination by prosecutor Lisa Lindsey, Adams-Rogers acknowledged she had a legal duty to ensure the safety of her foster children.

"I didn't delegate my duty to anybody else," Adams-Rogers said. "I performed my duty."

The agency placed Isaac and his sister in Adams-Rogers' three-bedroom home on June 29, 2006, though she already was caring for three adopted daughters, including an 18-year-old, and a 15-year-old foster daughter.

Adams-Rogers said Isaac and his sister arrived filthy, covered in bruises and with only the soiled clothing they wore. She said she immediately bought pull-up diapers and clothing for the children although she did not document the bruises through photographs or by drawing what foster parents call a body chart.

Adams-Rogers admitted she hired a woman to help her care for the kids, but did not clear her through the agency.

She denied that her adult sons or grandsons lived in her home, despite testimony from two former foster children and a grandson's ex-girlfriend that an adult son lived in the basement. Lindsey produced copies of Adams-Rogers' federal tax returns for the last three years in which she claimed the adult son as a dependent living in her home for at least six months of the year.

From 2-4 p.m. on the day Isaac died, Adams-Rogers said, Isaac, his sister, the 12-year-old and her 1-year-old daughter were playing and watching television in an upstairs bedroom while she was downstairs. Adams-Rogers said at one point she went to the "top of the landing" and could see Isaac in the bedroom and he seemed fine. She admitted she never

told police that before.

A short time later, she said, the 12-year-old came downstairs and told her Isaac was taking a nap.

Shortly after 4 p.m., Adams-Rogers' 18-year-old daughter screamed for her mother after finding Isaac unresponsive on a bed. He had numerous bruises, and chest burns, officials said.

That night, a homicide detective asked Adams-Rogers who might have killed Isaac. She mentioned her 12-year-old daughter first, then the 15-year-old foster daughter.

"You would agree with me that if you had supervised those children better that day, that Isaac would still be alive?" Lindsey asked.

"Yes," Adams-Rogers said.

Closing statements are scheduled for Monday.

Contact **JACK KRESNAK** at 313-223-4544 or [jkresnak@freepress.com](mailto:jkresnak@freepress.com).

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June 14, 2007

## Isaac judge boots foster mother's family members from trial

Karen Bouffard / The Detroit News

**DETROIT** --Family members of the foster mother on trial in the death of 2-year-old Isaac Lethbridge were thrown out of the courtroom today for the second time in as many weeks, and this time were barred for the remainder of the trial.

The case of Charlsie Adams-Rogers, 60, is expected to go to the jury Monday following closing arguments by the prosecution. She's charged with involuntary manslaughter for failing to protect Isaac from the multiple blunt force trauma and burns that killed him on Aug. 16. She also faces two counts of child abuse involving Isaac and his then-4-year-old sister.

Members of the jury sent a note to the judge complaining about noise from the back row of the courtroom where about a half dozen of Adams-Rogers relatives were sitting. An even larger group of her supporters was expelled from the courtroom last week, after witnesses complained they were being glared at and intimidated.

Judge Vera Massey Jones told Adams-Rogers the spectators did nothing to convince the jury of her innocence.

"When they see that kind of conduct, the disrespect for authority, they assume you yourself do the same thing," Massey Jones said. "I don't even want them in the building until this matter is decided, because jurors come in and out."

Adams-Rogers testified for about two hours in her own defense this morning, but was later grilled for more than an hour by Wayne County Assistant Prosecutor Lisa Lindsey who used the defendant's prior statements, tax forms and other documents to try and trap her in lies.

"I treat them as though they were my own -- every one that I've had," the Detroit woman said.

"I've had to go to the hospital with the children. I've stayed up all night with the children. I've comforted children. And I've helped them to cope with what they don't get from the agency, and sometimes when their parents don't come."

Earlier today, prosecutors used copies of Adams-Rogers tax returns from the past three years to show that she claimed one of her sons was living in the home, even though she previously testified that he was not. Two former foster children testified Wednesday that Adams-Rogers told them to lie to foster care workers about how many people were living in Adams-Rogers house on Greenlawn.

Lindsey also produced forms Adams-Rogers filled out to admit her then-adopted daughter to Kingswood psychiatric hospital in 2003. On the forms, Adams-Rogers stated that the girl showed "severe aggression to classmate and peers", contrary to her court testimony that the 12-year-old did not appear to be dangerous.

Adams-Rogers has blamed the girl for inflicting the injuries that killed Isaac, but her defense rests on proving to the jury that Adams-Rogers had no way of anticipating that the girl was capable of such violence.

Lindsey repeatedly tried to get Adams-Rogers to admit that she was responsible for protecting Isaac from the abuse that occurred while the 12-year-old was allegedly tending him.

Asked if, knowing what happened to Isaac, there was anything she would do differently the day that he died, Adams-Rogers replied, "I never thought (the girl) was a threat to that child."

You can reach Karen Bouffard at (734) 462-2206 or [kbouffard@detnews.com](mailto:kbouffard@detnews.com).

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June 14, 2007

## Isaac's foster mom: I treat kids 'as though they were my own'

Karen Bouffard / The Detroit News

**DETROIT** -- A foster mother on trial for involuntary manslaughter in the death of a 2-year-old boy took the stand today to counter testimony that she lied and misled doctors and social workers to cover up abuse.

Charlsie Adams-Rogers, 60, told Wayne County Circuit Court jurors today she lovingly cared for all her foster children with little help from foster care workers, and despite the children's special needs.

"I treat them as though they were my own -- every one that I've had," the Detroit woman said.

"I've had to go to the hospital with the children. I've stayed up all night with the children. I've comforted children. And I've helped them to cope with what they don't get from the agency, and sometimes when their parents don't come."

For a week, prosecutors have called witnesses who testified that Isaac Lethbridge suffered repeated abuse before his death Aug. 16, including multiple bruises and burns from what appeared to be cigarettes and an iron.

The boy died just six weeks after he was transferred to Adams-Rogers' care from another foster home, where he was suspected to have been abused.

Adams-Rogers, who has blamed her adopted 13-year-old daughter for the death, faces 15 years in prison if convicted of involuntary manslaughter and child abuse of Isaac's 4-year-old sister. She is expected to be the last witness in the case.

Closing arguments are expected this afternoon, after which Adams-Rogers' fate will be in the hands of the jury.

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## 'May God save your soul,' judge tells mom

Warren woman charged in death of 2-year-old son; father released

By Norb Franz  
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

A judge on Thursday scolded a Warren woman accused in a pattern of child abuse that resulted in the death of her 2-year-old son this week.

Crystal Tamara Conklin, 27, cried during her video arraignment on charges of open murder and first-degree child abuse. But 37th District Judge Walter Jakubowski Jr. told the accused mother that he wasn't impressed by the "dramatics" of her reactions during the brief court hearing and said she failed her role as mother to little Sean Sowards.

"You're a danger to other children in that home," the judge said in setting bond at \$500,000 cash/surety. "May God save your soul, young lady."

Warren police arrested the Warren woman and the toddler's father -- the couple has been together eight years but are not married -- on Wednesday, shortly after the toddler's death. The father, Michael Sowards, was released from police custody Thursday after investigators discussed their initial findings with the Macomb County Prosecutor's Office.

While jailed Thursday, Conklin, who is 7 1/2 months pregnant, complained of physical discomfort related to her pregnancy. She was taken to a local hospital for examination and returned to the police lockup.

Detectives said the 2-year-old boy suffered massive head injuries and numerous bruises. They refused to specify injuries until the Wayne County Medical Examiner's Office conducts an autopsy.

"These were horrific," Detective Cpl. Ken Marsee said.

Police have said that Conklin claimed Sean had a vision problem and bumped into furniture. The father on Monday arrived from work to the family's home in the 2200 block of Jarvis Avenue, in the Dequindre Road-Nine Mile area, and found Sean unconscious. He took the boy to nearby St. John Oakland General Hospital.

The toddler was transferred to St. John Hospital, Detroit, where he underwent emergency surgery to relieve fluid on his brain.

Meantime, the couple's 4-year-old daughter is in the custody of Macomb County Child Protective Services.

Conklin's preliminary exam is scheduled for June 28.

According to court records, the parents' landlord started eviction proceedings on May 31 because of non-payment of rent. According to a consent agreement signed by the couple, they agreed to move out if they didn't pay \$1,226 in rent and costs by midnight tonight.

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June 15, 2007

**Warren**

## Judge admonishes woman in death of 2-year old

**Edward L. Cardenas / The Detroit News**

**WARREN** -- A Warren judge severely chastised a 27-year-old pregnant woman Thursday during her arraignment on charges that she killed her 2-year-old son, saying being a mother "doesn't mean you kill your child."

Crystal Conklin of Warren was charged in 37th District Court with open murder and first-degree child abuse in the child abuse death of her son. She is nearly eight months pregnant with her third child.

"The court finds this crime very disturbing. The good Lord gave you the title of mother," said Chief Judge Walter Jakubowski. "Mom doesn't mean kill your child."

Jakubowski set her bond at \$500,000. Conklin is being held in the Macomb County Jail pending her preliminary exam June 28.

Her arraignment was delayed until midafternoon because Conklin was complaining of discomfort due to her pregnancy. She was checked at a local hospital and returned to the Warren lock-up for her video arraignment. As she sobbed, she was again admonished by Jakubowski.

"Your dramatics are not impressing the court," he said.

The charges stem from injuries the child -- whose name is not being released -- suffered Monday.

He was taken Monday night to St. John Oakland Hospital in Madison Heights by his father, who came home from work and found his son unresponsive. He was later transferred to the St. John Medical Center in Detroit, where he was treated for a closed head injury. Officials also found numerous bruises on his body.

The child died from his injuries Wednesday. "He was in care and custody of the mom," said Warren Police Det. Ken Marsee.

Conklin had told investigators that the child suffered the injuries from bumping into walls and falling down.

Marsee said the father of the child was not charged but could still face charges.

The couple's 4-year-old daughter is in state custody. An autopsy is expected to be conducted on the boy today.

*You can reach Edward L. Cardenas at (586) 468-0529 or [ecardenas@detnews.com](mailto:ecardenas@detnews.com).*

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## Macomb County news briefs

June 15, 2007

### **WARREN: Woman arraigned in son's death**

Crystal Conklin, 27, of Warren was arraigned in 37th District Court on Thursday on charges of open murder and first-degree child abuse in the death of her 2-year-old son.

She was being held in the Macomb County Jail in lieu of \$500,000 bond.

Conklin's fiancé returned to their home Monday night and asked where the boy was, police said. She said he'd been throwing up and was lying down. After finding him unresponsive, the fiancé took him to St. John Oakland Hospital. Hospital staff called police after finding new and old bruises on his body.

The boy, whose name was not released, was transferred to St. John Detroit Hospital and underwent emergency brain surgery Tuesday. He died Wednesday.

Conklin, who needed medical attention Thursday, is due back in district court June 28. Her fiancé is no longer in police custody, but he is expected to face charges.

The couple have a 4-year-old daughter, who is in the custody of Child Protective Services.

*Compiled by Steve Neavling and Dan Cortez.*

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## Warren mom charged with murder in death of her 2-year-old son

June 14, 2007

By DAN CORTEZ

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

A pregnant Warren woman has been charged with open murder in connection with the death of her 2-year-old son.

Crystal Tamara Conklin, 27, was arraigned in 37th District Court today on charges of open murder and first-degree child abuse. She was being held in Macomb County Jail in lieu of \$500,000 bond.

Conklin's fiancé returned to the couple's home on Jarvis Street about 9:30 p.m. Monday after work and asked where the boy was, Warren police said.

Conklin said he had been throwing up throughout the day and was lying down.

The fiancé then found the boy unresponsive and took him to St. John Oakland Hospital. Staff at the hospital called police after they found new and old bruises all over the boy's body.

The boy, whose name was not released, was transferred to St. John Detroit Hospital, where he underwent emergency brain surgery on Tuesday. He died the next day.

Conklin, who needed medical attention Thursday before the arraignment, is due back in district court on June 28. Her fiancé has been cooperating with police and is no longer in custody, although he is expected to face charges.

The couple also has a 4-year-old daughter, who is now in the custody of Child Protective Services.

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## Man gets 9 months for sex with 14-year-old

Girl was friend of daughter of 'MySpace mom,' who gave permission

By Jameson Cook  
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

One of two men who had sex with 14-year-old girls -- with one of the girls' mother's permission -- was sentenced Thursday to nine months in jail and three years probation.

James E. Przeadzki, 21, received the sentence after pleading guilty to assault with intent to commit sexual penetration with a girl in the Utica apartment of Tammy Fennell, who recently was convicted of a misdemeanor child abuse charge for allowing the sexual activity.

The sentence by Judge Donald Miller in Macomb County Circuit Court was slightly below the sentencing guideline range of 10 to 23 months in jail or prison.

"I'm a little disappointed because we had an agreement that he would get at least one year in jail," assistant Macomb prosecutor Molly Zappitell said after the sentencing.

Przeadzki's attorney, Khalid Sheikh, said after the hearing that he believed the sentence was fair because the sexual contact was consensual and the girl had told Przeadzki she was 17.

"It was appropriate under the circumstances," he said.

Przeadzki, who has a prior felony larceny conviction, suffered other penalties, including revocation of his status under the Holmes Youthful Trainee Act, which would have wiped his record clean had he stayed out of trouble during the five years of probation.

Judge Miller gave Przeadzki several conditions he must meet -- such as registering as a sex offender and staying away from anyone 17 and under -- and warned him that any violation will result in a prison term between 23 months and 10 years, the maximum penalty.

"I would try to memorize them (conditions) while you're in jail," Miller told him. "If you come back here, it's 23 months to 10 years. Don't force me to do that. Don't get into any more trouble."

Przeadzki apologized for the incident and said he was taking responsibility for his actions. Already serving 75 days in the Macomb County Jail and

dressed in jail garb at the hearing, he was taken away to serve the remaining 200 days.

Sheikh said Przeadzki's predicament shows the consequences when a young man moves out of his home at a young age, 17, and lives in "an unstructured environment."

Przeadzki has earned his general education degree and told the judge during the hearing that he planned to attend Macomb Community College and study finance.

Fennell, who called herself "Tammy Tokes" and bragged about her partying lifestyle on a MySpace page, was sentenced last month to two years probation and a \$500 fine for allowing Christopher M. Garcia, a friend of Przeadzki, to move into her home and have relations with her daughter, who is pregnant.

Fennell's daughter has been removed from her care and is in foster care. The girl is pregnant with whom officials believe is Garcia's child. She also had at least one prior miscarriage.

The girl also gained media attention in 2004 when she fled to Indiana to have sex with a man she met on MySpace. She told the man she was 18. Before anything sexual occurred, they were found by police and the man was let go.

Garcia, 21, who has prior convictions, is mulling a plea bargain offer from prosecutors and must decide by Monday whether to accept it or force a trial.

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## Infant hospitalized in possible case of child abuse

Updated: June 15, 2007 06:11 AM EDT

**GRAND RAPIDS --** Grand Rapids police are investigating a possible case of child abuse.

A 5-month-old baby is in the hospital with head and arm injuries.

Police say they received a call from a hospital Thursday night after the child was brought into the emergency room.

The victim has a fractured skull and broken left arm, but is expected to survive.

Police say they are trying to locate a specific person they want to interview.



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## Former day-care aid gets long prison sentence for molesting

By Lisa Roose-Church  
DAILY PRESS & ARGUS

A former Hartland Consolidated Schools District day-care aid will serve at least 25 years in prison for molesting a 7-year-old girl, and taking photographs of the assaults.

In tearful words punctuated with anger, the three girls' parents asked Livingston County Circuit Judge Stanl Sean Mickael Wilson the maximum sentence behind bars.



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Latreille departed upward from the state's sentencing order and ordered Wilson to serve 25-80 years in the Michigan Department of Corrections for first-degree criminal sexual conduct for molesting a 7-year-old girl.

The now 7-year-old girl's parents cried, hugged one another and thanked the judge for the sentence.

Wilson also was ordered to serve 10-15 years and 13 months for molesting two other girls, then ages 5 and 6, in separate incidents that occurred while Wilson babysat for the girls and took them on field trips to Kensington Metropark in July 2005. The judge ordered the sentences run concurrent and all three sentences to be served until Wilson is not granted early parole.

"I think you should not walk the streets again," Latreille told Wilson.

The 7-year-old victim's father read from his daughter's writings, titled "When I was Touched Book," saying she felt the assault was all her fault. She wrote that she felt "surprised, shocked, scared and upset."

"I would like to give him a taste of his own medicine," the girl wrote.

Her father then turned, looked Wilson in the eye and said he was finally smiling because the defendant was smiling back at him. Wilson said he was finally smiling because the defendant was smiling back at him.

"When you're beaten to death in prison you can look up from hell; I'll be smiling again," the father told Wilson. Wilson said he was finally smiling because the defendant was smiling back at him.

The 7-year-old girl's mother said she believes castration, death or hanging would be appropriate, and she pleaded guilty to the assault on her daughter, pleading no contest and citing his lack of memory as a reason.

"No doubt he remembers," she said. "His nightmares will now be as painful as it is for us."

The parents expressed concern that Wilson posted the photographs of the assault on the Internet, but his attorney, David LaCommare Jr., said the photographs were only on his client's home computers.

Livingston County Sheriff's Detective Jim Bolling, who investigated, said it is not known if Wilson posted any photos of the assault on the Internet.

online.

Bolling said a forensic exam of Wilson's home computers showed about 400 images identified as child porn also about 100 digital videos depicting children in various sexual acts or positions that were downloaded from the computer, the detective said.

LaCommare said his client takes "full responsibility" for his actions. Wilson apologized to the families, saying he was sexually abused as a child, too.

"I wasn't brave enough, as the three young victims, to tell my parents," he said. "I am not using my past as obviously made the wrong choice."


Wilson said his apology was "mere words, but if you can take a look at my soul, I am crying and hurting at the thought of what I did."


Bolling said the case remains open, as he attempts to identify at least three other girls in sexually explicit photos on Wilson's computer. Those girls are in the same age group as the known victims.

"I'm very satisfied," Bolling said about the sentence. "The case is still open. I'm not going to quit."

The Daily Press & Argus does not identify victims of sexual abuse and the girls' parents are not being identified as such.

Contact Daily Press & Argus reporter Lisa Roose-Church at (517) 552-2846 or at [lrchurch@gannett.com](mailto:lrchurch@gannett.com).


**STORYCHAT** 

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Comments by: **mrm8956** Posted: Fri Jun 15, 2007 11:44 am  
I got hit by a car when I was a kid. So it must be OK for me to run people over with my Car. What an asshole. I feel so bad for those little Kids. Parents, Get Them into Therapy A.S.A.P. Now I think I would like to Tie this P.O.S. to a tree in the woods, Cover him with hunny, (Oh He's Naked too) And shoot at him with an air pellet Rifle. I dont want to kill him, But instead aim at certian parts of his Anatomy to insure he no longer has "Urges" Then we just leave him there for a few days and let the bugs have their fun with him. Then the state can put him in a cage with the rest of the Animals with that sign around his neck that reads" I Have Sex With Children" And Let Justice take its course. I DO HATE CHILD MOLESTERS!

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Comments by: **JustSayin'** Posted: Fri Jun 15, 2007 10:21 am  
"at least 25 years in prison" isn't enough for him.  
As for the mother of the 7 year old saying "castration, death or hanging would be appropriate" I agree 100%.  
He's never going to pay enough for the hell he's made for those kids.  


---

Comments by: **chet** Posted: Fri Jun 15, 2007 8:38 am  
Poor Sean. I didn't know that HE was the real victim here. He was abused as a kid, so he didn't realize that it was wrong. I feel just awful for him   
So if your mom drove after drinking when you were a kid, it's O.K. for you to do it. If your Uncle Johnny robbed banks, how are you supposed to know that's not an acceptable practice?? I could puke every time I hear this excuse. If he was abused as a child (and how can you believe anything a guy like this says), then he more than ANYONE should know just how wrong it is. Shut up. Go to prison. Get your ass kicked, and die already.

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Originally published June 15, 2007

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Thursday, June 14, 2007

## Advocates for Kids Needed

Updated: June 14, 2007 08:56 AM EDT

In one recent year in Allegan County, there were more than 600 cases of child abuse or neglect. To help children as they go through the court process in these cases, trained volunteers are needed.

Volunteers are appointed by a judge to provide citizen advocacy and fair and accurate information while the child's future is being decided. Court appointed special advocates, or CASA, volunteers meet weekly with the kids and gather information and insight that might help the court determine if the child should be put back in their homes or not. They represent the child's best interest in court.

Volunteers in this program receive forty hours of specialized training. When they complete this training, judges appoint them to represent a child. CASA volunteers are asked to commit to the child until his or her case closes.

Because the need is so great, more volunteers are being trained this month. You must be at least 21 years old with a valid driver's license to apply to volunteer. Criminal background checks are made for every applicant.

If you are interested in being at CASA volunteer, contact Safe Harbor Children's Advocacy Center at 269-673-3791.



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## Fathers seeking access to their children

By [Cornelius Fortune](#) | Published Yesterday | [Main News](#)

Cornelius Fortune

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### June 17 is Father's Day.



**LEDON CLAYBORN** (center, holding the family dog, Jack) is joined by (from left) sons, LeDon, Jr. and Drew, daughter, Desirae, and second wife, Barbara. Clayborn now has custody of his children, following a court battle with his ex-wife. - Oxygen Photography

For LeDon Clayborn, 40, there really is a reason to celebrate. The battle for his three children is finally over, thanks to a revealing testimony from his children, in which they turned to their mother on the witness stand and said, "Mom, we love you, but we want to be with our dad."

The reluctant court gave Clayborn full custody of his children, an unlikely occurrence, in his opinion.

He watched the relationship with his ex-wife unravel in a tale he couldn't have imagined, from the tangled web of infidelity (on both ends), to his wife admitting that she was bi-sexual, and the incessant court visits that put their children in



the middle of the conflict.

"Kids need both their parents," Clayborn said. "I've sacrificed my whole life to try my best to be as good as a father I can be to my kids." t's

Clayborn grew up in Detroit in a single-parent household. He wanted his relationship with his own children to be different.

Though he remarried, his job as a parent is a solitary one with his ex-wife living out of state. His current wife doesn't drive, so the workload of dropping off the kids at practice, school, and other places falls on his shoulders.

"I think it's a shame the courts don't see. You go through so much to prove your worth," Clayborn said. "In Oakland County use the courts as a weapon, they favor the mother. (She) can be on drugs (and they will send her to a rehab program without taking the children away), but the father? He has to prove over and over again.

"These kids need both their parents and anything that gets in the way of that is a travesty. This country should be going out of its way so parents of both genders have access to their children. I feel very fortunate. I'm one of the lucky ones."

Putting the emphasis back on fatherhood and its importance is Dr. Jeffrey M. Johnson, president of the National Partnership for Community Leadership. He helped organize the 9th Annual International Fatherhood Conference, being held at Morehouse College, June 13-15. It is a chance for parents and practioners to discuss the issue of Black fatherhood in America.

"How do we continue to bring (to the forefront) the importance of fathers being involved in family? The basic emphasis of Social Security programs and welfare programs is to take care of women and children," Johnson said. "A lot of men, particularly men of color, have chosen not to compete with the government. The irony in our community is tha we end up with these serial moms and serial dads, and our kids have to suffer the consequences."

Johnson has been on the forefront of getting the voices of Black fathers heard in a system that often turns a deaf ear. In his research he found that by their 16th birthdays, 80 percent of Black children will live in a household without their fathers. Only 36 percent of White children are in the same situation.

"The irony is these young men and women are still having babies," Johnson said. "Left unattended to, this is what we get. When we work with fathers the right way, we teach them about their heart: — it's important to love when you're connected at that level, there's a bonding that goes on that gives life meaning. Short of that, the meaning of life is a guessing."

Johnson grew up in Detroit and lost his father at the age of 12. The experience of having his father in the household for those years left an indelible mark upon him.

"I firmly believe we can develop responsible fathers," Johnson said. "When boys and girls have not been exposed to responsible men and fathers, we have to teach them, what that's about.

Johnson wrote the foreword to Robin Wright-King's book, "Papa Was a Rolling Stone: A Daughter's Journey to Forgiveness." In it Wright-King chronicles a history with an absent father, a man who fathered 10 children from different mothers, including her.

The book examines the importance of fathers to the development of young girls striving to become women.

"I think a father presents a template for us as daughters," Wright-King said. "How we see our fathers treat our mothers or his sisters is kind of a guiding force in the way we allow men to treat us."

Through writing the book, she learned to eventually forgive her father, although it wasn't easy.

"We can have better relationships with our fathers if we forgive and heal," Wright-King said. "We really need to start making Father's Day every day and be careful not to beat up on fathers. Some of them are dead broke, as opposed to deadbeat. We need to look for ways to enable fathers to be in the lives of their children, to encourage fathers to be involved. The benefits can be unbelievable."

Vince Ilagan, 32, had a difficult court battle, which ultimately resulted in his receiving joint custody of his 3- year-old daughter.

"There's nothing I wouldn't do for my daughter," Ilagan said. "Whatever decision I have to make will be in her best interest. I believe that my judge was fair.

"But the overall system needs reform. It costs a great deal of money. My situation wasn't just a custody battle; it was like a mix of a divorce case and another civil issue, lumped into one proceeding. I feel there's heavy favor for the mother. There's too much emphasis placed on disparity in incomes, rather than the substantive facts."

James Muffett, president, Citizens for Traditional Values (CTV), an organization based in Lansing, agrees with Ilagan that fatherhood should be valued more in society.

"We pay a lot of attention to the short shrift that fathers often receive," Muffett said. "I know there are some dads who have squandered their rights – some mothers have too. My view is a kid needs a mom and a dad, and any system or any program that deprives legitimate moms and dads, should be corrected."

The weight the father holds within the family structure shouldn't be ignored, Muffett noted.

"I raised five kids," Muffett said. "When I think of fatherhood, I look at two things: the most challenging, but the most rewarding in my life."

Clayborn says his life is a particularly busy one, but he doesn't mind the extra work. He's looking forward to Father's Day, even though he won't exactly be resting.

"Dad will probably get to barbecue on Father's Day," Clayborn said. "I have no help. It's just me. It's a challenge. I would love to get more help, but that's just not the real world."

Robin Wright-King will read an excerpt from her book, followed by a Q & A session, Friday, June 15, 6 p.m., at Barnes and Noble bookstore, 82 W. Warren. Part of the Wayne State University Organization of Black Alumni's Book and Wine Series, free wine will be supplied by Tastemakers Detroit, an organization that educates new African American wine connoisseurs.

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Article published Jun 14, 2007  
State expands drug cost Web site  
Associated Press

LANSING — The state announced today that consumers now can search the prices of 150 prescription drugs on a state Web site.

The site — [www.michigandrugprices.com](http://www.michigandrugprices.com) — had been listing 30 drugs that can be searched by ZIP code and pharmacy.

But last month, Republican Attorney General Mike Cox criticized the Michigan Department of Community Health for not adding 120 drugs to the site. He has conducted surveys showing wide price disparities for the same drugs at pharmacies just miles apart.

“We believe the increased utility of the state’s Web site will give citizens the access they deserve and the ability to save thousands of dollars on their prescription drugs per year,” DCH Director Janet Olszewski said in a statement.

A new feature gives driving directions to the pharmacies on the site. The expanded site also lets users file complaints with the state when they believe drug pricing information is incorrect or price gouging may be occurring.

DCH spokesman T.J. Bucholz said it cost about \$17,000 to build and construct the Web site. He said the money was available because the department saved money from a vendor in the Medicaid program.

“We want citizens to have the ability to report possible prescription drug pricing inaccuracies as soon as possible, since prescription drug prices can vary daily,” Olszewski said.

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# THE BAY CITY TIMES

## Teens are first CORY Place residents to graduate from high school

Thursday, June 14, 2007

By **AMY JO JOHNSON**

**TIMES WRITER**

Stacey L. VanHollan always knew she'd graduate, but it certainly was a long, rough road to get there.

Her mother suffered a massive heart attack at the age of 43 and died last year.

And VanHollan, 18, doesn't know where her dad is.

"I don't know. Somewhere in Saginaw," she said.

After her mother's death, VanHollan, who grew up in Saginaw, said her family was disbanded.

"My one brother, someone adopted him after my ma passed away," VanHollan said. "He's like 9 or 10 now."

Her 16-year-old sister was relocated down state.

VanHollan went to live with her 21-year-old sister, Tiffanie VanHollan, in Saginaw after her mom's death but the two got into a fight and VanHollan moved out in July.

The Saginaw County Department of Human Services placed VanHollan with a foster family in Bay City but that didn't work out either. In February, VanHollan started calling CORY Place home.

Located in Hampton Township, CORY Place is a United Way agency that offers counseling, crisis intervention and sheltered care for troubled youths, including runaways.

VanHollan, a Bay City Central High School senior who graduated on June 10, and Amanda Slater, a Pinconning Area High School senior who graduated on May 24, became the first two CORY Place residents to graduate from high school, said CORY Place Executive Director Jheri McAfee.

McAfee said it's a huge achievement.

"Just to know that things come together," she said. "I've been sharing the good news with our collaborative partners."

McAfee said she's happy on many levels. She's happy for each of the girls but she's also happy for CORY Place.

These are two students who probably wouldn't have graduated without help and to know they will not be part of some future high school drop-out statistic is heartening, she said.

"It's just wonderful what can happen when people work together," McAfee said.

The Times was unable to reach Slater for an interview for this story.

VanHollan says she's proud of herself.

"I'm real happy and I know if my mom was alive she'd be real happy too," she said, noting that her mom had always wanted each of her children to graduate.

VanHollan said she's thankful for the people at CORY Place because they've pushed her to fulfill her dreams.

Looking to the future, VanHollan has applied for some jobs locally at places like Wendy's, Big Boy and Pet Supplies Plus, and she hopes to go to college at Michigan Career and Technical Institute, near Kalamazoo.

Her possible long-term goal is to become a nurse or a mortician.

- Amy Jo Johnson covers features for The Times. She can be reached at 894-9637 or by e-mail at [ajohnson@bc-times.com](mailto:ajohnson@bc-times.com).

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Article published Jun 15, 2007

## Group looks to shine at Maxey

By Christopher Behnan  
**DAILY PRESS & ARGUS**  
From pain to promise.

That's the journey Shining Light — a Pennsylvania-based Christian music and dance troupe — hopes to spark in juvenile inmates at the W.J. Maxey Boys Training School in Green Oak Township on Saturday.

The group will perform its elaborate multimedia presentation, "Beauty From Pain," for more than 60 boys, staff and guests in the facility's large gymnasium.

The 55-member ensemble show is a series of musical vignettes — each of which highlights real-life issues such as abuse, neglect and self-cutting.

Some of the stories are based on actual experiences from performers' lives.

Kangethe Kamuyu, the nondenominational chaplain at Maxey, said the facility — which offers a host of religious-based services for inmates — welcomed the group.

"I thought it was very relevant for the boys that we deal with at Maxey. They have a lot of pain, all kinds of pain," Kamuyu said.

"They need to know that there is the other side where they can be able to deal with the pain," he added.

Kamuyu and Derek Hitchcock, campus director, contend that a religious-based regimen — along with clinical treatment — is consistently a catalyst for its inmate population of 150 boys.

Kamuyu said presentations like "Beauty From Pain" often cause a "spiritual renewal" in inmates, and spark personal growth and personal development.

Being that Saturdays are normally reserved for cleaning and other chores, a large number of youths are expected to attend Saturday's performance.

Maxey inmates aren't required to attend the Shining Light, or any other religion-based presentation, for that matter. Doing so could constitute a breach of church and state, as Maxey is part of the Michigan Department of Human Services.

By providing a "volunteer ministry," however, Maxey inmates often seek out churches to attend after their release, Hitchcock said.

The campus has its own nondenominational church building, but, again, attendance is voluntary. In August, local churches will be welcomed to the campus to outreach to youths.

Aside from a wide range of Christian prayer services and choir performances, Maxey has also welcomed Muslim and Jewish groups, he added. Maxey once made arrangements to host a Jewish boy's bar mitzvah.

Shining Light, now on its Great Lakes Tour, has performed in a variety of detention facilities and prisons, including at notorious Rikers Island in New York.

Kathy Hackman, one of the directors of the show, said the group — at no one's surprise — faced a verbally lewd crowd at Rikers Island. While Maxey pales in size and scope to Rikers, Hackman said she expects at least some of the same with the boys.

The troupe requests to perform at such facilities, and will also perform at the Adrian Training School for girls during its Michigan stay.



"Beauty From Pain" includes a live band and chorus, in addition to dance and video components.

Shining Light, now in its 11th year, secured the show at Maxey early this year.

*Contact Daily Press & Argus reporter Christopher Behnan at (517) 548-7108 or at cbehnan@gannett.com.*

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## KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

### Assault on toddler was `random' Psychological exam ordered for teen accused of beating 15-month-old boy

Thursday, June 14, 2007

By Rex Hall Jr. and Lynn Turner

#### Kalamazoo Gazette

A psychological examination has been ordered for a teenager accused of what a prosecutor called a random attack on a 15-month-old boy.

The toddler was released Wednesday from a Kalamazoo hospital.

Kalamazoo County Prosecutor Jeff Fink said he's never seen anything quite like this case in 26 years as a prosecutor.

Investigators said the toddler's family was moving into a house on Sheldon Street in Kalamazoo when he wandered away and was assaulted in a nearby wooded area Monday. The toddler's mother reported seeing a teenage boy fleeing the area where she found her son.

``It's random," Fink said Wednesday after the 13-year-old was formally charged with assault with intent to commit great bodily harm and false imprisonment.

``There's no indication the ... (victim's) family had any contact" with the older boy or his family, the prosecutor said.

The teenager's attorney waived his client's preliminary hearing Wednesday. The teen will remain in the Kalamazoo County Juvenile Home, where he has been held since his arrest Tuesday.

Kalamazoo County Circuit Court Family Division Referee Marie Johnson on Wednesday ordered the boy to receive a psychological examination, which Fink requested.

The teen ``indicated to detectives that he wanted to see what it was like" to assault the younger boy, Capt. Jim Mallery of the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety said Wednesday.

The teen's father said after Wednesday's court session that he was on probation for a child-abuse charge filed against him after he ``whipped" his son. ``Now look at it," the man said as he abruptly left the courthouse. ``He'd have been OK if they had just stayed out of my business."

Donna Innes, the teen's court-appointed lawyer, described the boy -- listed in court records as being 5 feet 5 inches tall and weighing 115 pounds -- as ``scared right now."

``He's very quiet and soft-spoken with me," Innes said.

The toddler's mother attended Wednesday's court session but declined to speak to reporters afterward.

Because the teen is younger than age 14, he cannot be tried as an adult, so the matter will proceed through the juvenile-court system, Fink said. If the teen is found to be criminally responsible, options could include supervisory probation or incarceration until he turns 18.

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June 15, 2007

**Mark Gaffney: Labor voices**

## Stop blaming workers for state budget woes

Public sector employee pay and benefits aren't cause of deficit



As the budget crisis and accompanying gridlock continues to dominate Michigan's political landscape, it seems that some legislators and opinion leaders are back to square one.

Take the case of Mike Bishop, the Republican Senate Majority leader. This week, Sen. Bishop suggested that a good first step to solve the budget crisis is to look for concessions from state employees. He went on to suggest that state employees need to stop whining about requests that they make sacrifices.

### Pay concessions granted

How quickly he forgets. Just three years ago, shortly after Governor Jennifer Granholm took office, she succeeded in getting significant concessions from state employees, saving the state \$300 million.

But these savings did not come easy for the workers. Savings were found through furlough days, which are unplanned, forced days without pay -- imagine if your employer required that you take next week off, and refused you half of your next paycheck. Savings were found by deferring salary payments and converting some payments into 401(k) contributions. And savings were found through health care reforms with increased co-pays.

At the same time, while it seems to many people that the state Senate is accomplishing less than ever before, state employees are quite the opposite. These workers have been reduced to their lowest numbers since the 1970s. And they are providing more services, more efficiently to more citizens than ever before.

The reality is that state employees are already working hard to do more with less as they provide services to nearly 10 million citizens despite repeated budget cuts and two early retirement programs that have resulted in 7,000 fewer state workers to do the work.

State employees have already made significant economic concessions, and through it all have remained dedicated public servants working hard to provide critical services to us, the citizens.

But many people choose not to believe this. It is easier to repeat old prejudices and myths. It is convenient for some to say the budget problems are due to the public worker labor force. Rather than for those same people to find the courage to raise revenues.

Currently, the attack is also on teachers and school related personnel. Some say that providing education is expensive, so it must be that the work force has too many benefits and too much pay. The Legislature is considering a graded premium scheme where the current retiree health care benefit would become based on years of service. If this is implemented, some employees will lose some amount of future health insurance while Michigan legislators would still receive retiree health care coverage after only five years on the job. Rather than take cuts themselves, it's easier to blame workers.

Union workers are taxpayers. Construction workers who receive a state mandated prevailing wage level work in different locations, almost always work temporarily, go through three to five year apprenticeship training and more often suffer layoffs. They deserve a decent wage. To attack prevailing wage as a way to fix the state's budget is another example of blaming workers.

### Act 312 works

It's also argued that Act 312 needs fixing, but it's not broken. A true and careful analysis would show Act 312 works. We don't want police and firefighters to strike. They get binding arbitration instead. If the law was strictly held to and if arbitrators acted more quickly, Act 312 would work better in its current form. Rank and file police and firefighters are not overpaid.

Here's labors appeal today: Stop blaming teachers, stop blaming publicly employed nurses and counselors and stop blaming police, firefighters and others who keep us safe. Michigan's budget problems are not the fault of those taxpayers who are also workers.

Too many tax cuts and a changed economy put our state into a structural deficit. Repealing part of the 1998 income tax break and extending the sales tax to the new economy is the proper fix. It's a longer lasting solution than trying to blame taxpayers who work for a living.

*Mark Gaffney is president of the Michigan AFL-CIO.*

#### Labor Voices

Labor Voices columns are written for The News on a rotating basis by United Auto Workers President Ron Gettelfinger, Teamster President James Hoffa, Michigan AFL-CIO President Mark Gaffney and Michigan Education Association President Iris Salters. The News hopes to provide a forum for discussing workplace issues that are critical to a large segment of Michigan's population, whether or not they are union members. Look for Labor Voices every Friday in The Detroit News.

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